Refinery wings pertaining to promotions and transfer of their employees;

(b) whether it is also a fact that employees belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are particularly transferred to far-off places in the country while others are retained at one place upto 20-25 years or more or are posted at the places of their choices; and

(c) whether there is any machinery to look into or check such discrimination against the SC and ST employees?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) Promotion and transfers/postings of employees in Indian Oil are governed by the laid down policies taking into consideration Division specific requirements. Since the operations of various Divisions differ in nature, the processes followed by them also differ in approach and implementation.

As regards transfers, the policies for workmen are Division specific, whereas, for officers, the norms for transfer are common across Divisions.

(b) Transfers/postings of employees, including those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are governed by the guidelines applicable to all employees.

(c) There is a designated Liaison Officer in each Division, normally not below the rank of Head of Department to look into the grievances of the SC and ST employees including matters pertaining to transfers and postings.

**Non-availability of LPG cylinders**

690. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY:
SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL:
SHRI AJAY MAROO:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that there had been an acute shortage of L.P.G. cylinders during the month of September and October, 2005 in the capital;

(b) whether it is a fact that gas cylinders were available in the black market at the rate of Rs. 600 to 700 as against its actual cost of Rs. 250; and

(c) whether Government had conducted any enquiry in this regard and if so, the details thereof and the action taken against the dealers of L.P.G. connection in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Demand for LPG in the country is met by a combination of domestic production and imports. A temporary shortage of LPG emerged in September 2005 when Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), the single largest domestic supplier of LPG, announced a shut down of their Fluidized Catalytic Cracker (FCC) unit at Jamnagar for maintenance work with effect from October 2005, at just about the time global LPG supplies became tight, domestic production was affected by the fire at Mumbai High and partly on account of the impact of Hurricane Katrina on US refineries. This upset the plans made by our Oil Marketing Companies (OCMs) to effect imports in time to offset the anticipated shortage in supplies on account of the RIL shut down.

Further rumours in the market that OMCs would not be able to meet the demand led to a sudden spurt in demand. There was also a strike in bottling plants in the National Capital Territory (NCT) area towards the end of September 2005 which aggravated the situation. The Ministry took matters in hand early in October, 2005 when it was decided that through a combination of inventory management and imports, directly handled by a composite task force of the OMCs under the close supervision of the Government, physical shortages of supply would be overcome as quickly as possible. It was also decided that bottling plants in the NCT area would work on Sunday, 9th October 2005 and other holidays. On the basis of these decisions, it was announced that the physical shortage in the NCT area would end by Dusshera and substantively in the rest of the country by Deepavali. These objectives have been largely achieved. In addition to the arrangements made earlier by OMCs to import 642 Thousand Metric Tones (TMT) of LPG during the period October-December 2005, arrangements have been made to import and additional quantity of 237.9 TMT during this period, 116 TMT of which has already reached the country. Thus the overall physical shortage in the country at present has been reduced to only about 1.5% of the average monthly consumption of LPG.

However, the backlog at the micro-level may vary from market to market on account of operational reasons. The situation is expected to normalize further by the end of November 2005 on the restoration of production in RIL's refinery.

The following measures have been taken to prevent the diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes:-

(i) Under the LPG (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000 promulgated under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 the diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinders for commercial purposes by the distributors of OMCs is prohibited. The State Governments are empowered to take action against erring distributors under the provisions of this Order.

(ii) State Government are alerted from time to time to crack down the diversion of domestic cylinders for unauthorized usage.

(iii) As per the Marketing Discipline Guidelines (MDG) for LPG distributor, in case of establishment of any diversion/black marketing of domestic LPG cylinder for commercial purposes, the following action is taken against the distributor:

(a) Fine of Rs. 20,000 plus the price of LPG diverted at commercial rates for 1st offence.

(b) Fine of Rs. 50,000 plus the price of LPG diverted at commercial rates for 2nd offence, and

(c) Termination of the distributorship for 3rd offence.

(iv) The officials of OMCs carry out random checks at distributor's godown, delivery point as well as enroute to ensure that no diversion/black marketing takes place. Action against the erring distributor is taken in terms of MDG/or Distributorship Agreement.

**BPCL's deal with British Petroleum**

691. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that BPCL has signed a deal with British Petroleum to obtain six lakh barrels of the crude in October, when the 1.764 km. BTC pipeline is operational;